

# UPDATE

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## **FOOD LABELS TO INCLUDE TRANS FAT CONTENTS Improved Labels Will Help Consumers Choose Heart-Healthy Foods**

Food labels will be required to list the amount of unhealthy trans fatty acids or trans fat, to give consumers better information when choosing their foods. The new requirement through the Department's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will mean that manufacturers of most conventional foods and some dietary supplements will have to list in the Nutrition Facts panel the trans fat content of the product, in addition to the information about its overall fat content and saturated fat content.

The additional information will give consumers a more complete picture of fat content in foods allowing them to choose foods low in trans fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, all of which are associated with an increased risk of heart disease. Reducing the intake of trans fat and saturated fats is recommended by the Federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Under the new FDA regulations, by Jan. 1, 2006, consumers will be able to find trans fat listed on food nutrition labels directly under the line for saturated fat. The new information is the first significant change on the Nutrition Facts panel since it was established in 1993.

Trans fat occurs in foods when manufacturers use hydrogenation, a process in which hydrogen is added to vegetable oil in order to turn the oil into a more solid fat. Trans fat is often but not always found in the same foods as saturated fat, such as vegetable shortening, some margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods, salad dressings and other processed foods. By providing more useful information to consumers seeking a healthy diet, the new labels are expected to reduce the costs of illness and disease for Americans. The FDA estimates that the changes in regulations will save between \$900 million and \$1.8 billion each year in medical costs, lost productivity and pain and suffering.

In particular, comments in response to FDA's notice could assist the agency in further action to establish:

- New nutrient content claims about trans fat, for example, claims that a product is "low in trans fat" on its label.
- Qualifying criteria for trans fat in current nutrient content claims for saturated fat and cholesterol, lean, and extra lean claims, because the claims currently allowed by FDA in these areas may not appropriately reflect trans fat content.
- Health claims that contain a message about cholesterol-raising fats.

Visit the FDA website at: [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) for more information about trans-fats and the changes in the Nutrition Panel.



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